

THE DAILY NOVELETTE

THE WALLFLOWER

By Clarissa Muehle

"Who is the girl in the corner?" asked Mark Wynne of his young companion.

"Oh, that is Millie Parker—pretty, isn't she? But she can't dance, or sing, or play—she is a wallflower," they called her the "wallflower" and with a charming upward lift of her shoulder the most thoughtful one of all turned to him and he smiled again into the music of the dance.

Dr. Wynne could not dance very well and Elsie was glad to lose him for one of her own set, a graceful, black-eyed youth who sparkled as the town wit.

"Who is that sitting with Millie Parker?" asked Elsie suddenly.

"The medicine man is sitting in the shadow of the wallflower," sighed George.

"He cannot be enjoying himself," whispered Elsie.

"If looks count he is having the time of his life—and say, Elsie, she looks pretty tonight in that blue dress," he added.

"Where is Alfred Brown?" asked Elsie, changing the subject.

"Oh—h—h. Whither it—the fever!" "No! That makes thirty cases in town."

Elsie was silent after that. The epidemic had started, as such things usually do, in an unhealthy alum near the river's edge—and there had been whistles of polluted drinking water—of milk bottles washed in the river water—sanitation rules violated, and the town authorities were confronted with a grave situation.

Mark Wynne, passing through the little town from a hunting trip in the North, had stopped to see his old friend, the father of Elsie Lee, so his appearance at the little party was a happy accident.

Long after he had retired that night he thought of the dread disease which he thought of something Millie Parker had said to him that evening while her

young companions fox-trotted around them.

"We need nurses," said Millie thoughtfully.

"They can be sent from town—easily," exclaimed Mark, with a mental note to start something when he returned to the city.

"We have thirty here now—one for each case—and now we shall need more. Dr. Wynne, do you think I could help in some case—I have taken care of six people, my own, until they went—and there is no reason why I could not help save a life—I am alone except for some cousins with whom I live." She watched him expectantly.

"Have you any fear of the disease?" "No."

"Then you might do—you could help a regular trained nurse—relieve her. I will see what I can do."

But when two days later he tried to get word to Millie Parker he learned to his dismay that she had gone to a farmhouse three miles away to nurse an old man who was very ill.

"Poor as poverty herself, and gone to nurse a man who hasn't money enough to pay for his own medicine," complained Millie's elderly cousin.

"Cannot pay for his own medicine?" repeated the doctor. "I'll take that case myself. I came down to help out, and Miss Millie's case sounds like a desperate one."

"Desperately foolish," grumbled the timid soul as she closed the door gently behind him.

Millie did not question Mark's unexpected arrival at the plain little house on the rocky hillside. Old Peter Jenkins was very sick—he would never be any better—it was impossible to find any one to stay with him—he had no relatives, and so Millie had come.

"She's a pretty little girl," piped Peter in one of his lucid moments. "Reminds me of my Susie—little and always tender and careful of old folks. Susie's sleeping out there on the hillside along with her ma and her sisters and brothers. They left me all alone, and I'm just waiting for the word to go. Seems as if it would never come. He asked querulously.

Millie fitted into the room with a cup and spoon. "Just a little bit of this, Uncle Peter," she coaxed. "See,

I'll take a taste myself first to keep you company." The old man smiled wanly and took the medicine, his dim eyes following the blithe young form around the room. "She's as sweet and wholesome as them wallflowers my wife planted along the stone wall," he murmured.

Millie blushed as she met the young doctor's eyes, for she knew that he had heard her nickname of wallflower. One day Peter had a visitor, a grave-looking man, who stayed for a while and talked in a low tone to the sick man. The next day he came again and brought some other people with him. Dr. Wynne frowned on this, but Mr. Jenkins had his own way.

It was Millie who sat through the long night alone with the dying man; it was Millie who talked with him about Susie and the other children and the wife who had passed on before and who were all waiting for his coming on that other shore.

"And you, little wallflower," he whispered, "what of you, all alone in the world?"

"I shall find a way," said Millie bravely, trying not to cry over his going, for he did not want to stay. "I am learning to nurse sick people. Take some day I shall go to a large hospital training school for nurses and—"

"No, no, you will do nothing of the sort; you shall marry Dr. Wynne. He likes you, little wallflower, and you love him. My eyes are dim, but I could see that." He smiled cheerfully at her, and she hid her blushing face in her white apron and received his blessing on her bent head. Mark Wynne crept away from the room and Millie did not know that he had heard these words until long afterward. Before morning dawned again Peter Jenkins' happy spirit had winged upward to join his beloved ones, and Millie was alone.

A few days afterward, when the house was empty of its tenant and Millie was preparing to leave, the strange lawyer came to see her. "Peter Jenkins left a will," he said tersely. "He died a rich man. You are his sole heir."

The little wallflower, who thought

she had nursed a poor man, broke down and cried miserably. The lawyer took himself off and sent for Mark Wynne.

"You remember Mr. Jenkins' prophecy, don't you, Millie?" he asked.

"You heard?" fashed Millie. "Yes, and it is coming true, little wallflower, isn't it?" he whispered. "Millie Parker married?" shrieked Elsie Smith incredulously. "That little wallflower?"

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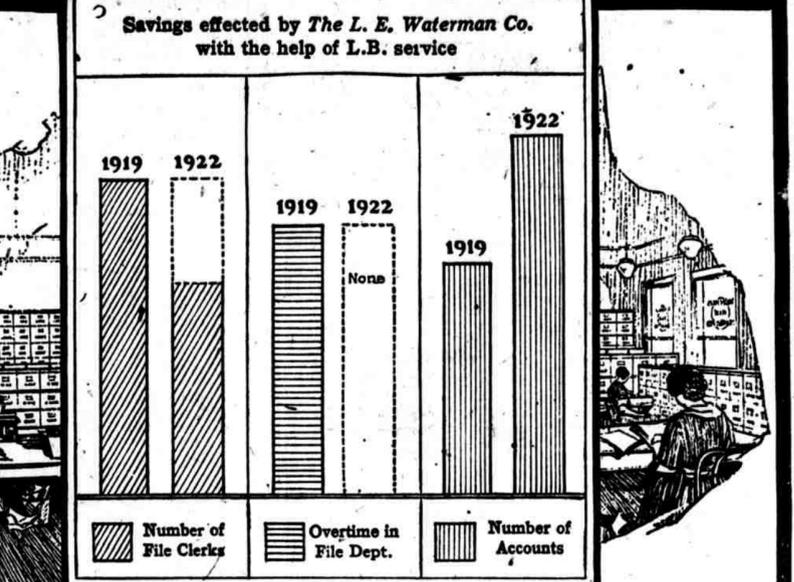
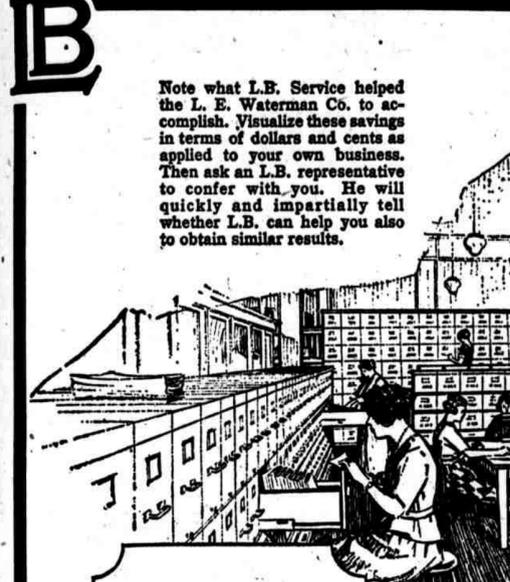
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